(c) the reaction of Government thereto; and

(d) the steps taken to put an end to such illegal mining?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF MINES (SHRI RAMESH BAIS): (a) to (d) Instances of illegal mining in different States are brought to the notice of Central Government from time to time. The States are the owners of minerals and illegal mining has serious revenue implications for the States. Appropriately therefore, the responsibility for checking illegal mining, if any, rests with the State Governments and hence detailed information in this regard is not centrally maintained.

To effectively curb illicit mining, State Governments have been empowered to make rules for preventing illegal mining, transportation and storage of minerals under the provisions of Section 23C of the Mines and Mineral (Development and Regulation) Act, 1957.

Discovering of gold ore in A.P.

842. DR. DASARI NARAYANA RAO: Will the Minister of MINES be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that large scale deposits of gold ore have been found in Kurnool district of Andhra Pradesh;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) by when, mining of gold is likely to start at the discovered sites?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF MINES (SHRI RAMESH BAIS): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. Geological Survey of India (GSI) a subordinate office under this Ministry has estimated a resource of 8.63 million tonnes gold ore with 1.62 to 4.65 grams per tonne of gold in Dona Sector in Kurnool district, Andhra Pradesh.

(c) As per National Mineral Policy, 1993 the exploration/exploitation of the gold deposits has been thrown open for Private Sector participation, both domestic and foreign. The Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation), Act, 1957 was amended in December, 1999 to make the provisions more investor friendly. The exploitation of the mineral will depend on its economic viability.